Obstacles to implementation of national environmental policy
- The case of a developing country

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ABSTRACT:

Environmental policy, specifically the aspect on noise, has in recent past been increasingly vital for many developing countries including Ghana. Policy on noise might not have been effectively implemented in Ghana due to varied reasons. Mixed method approach design was utilised to investigate the barriers to the implementation of national environmental policy. Data was sourced people living in residential areas in a suburb of Accra using questionnaire and some officials involved in policy formulation and implementation interviewed. Respondents for the study were selected using purposive and simple random sampling. The data was analysed with SPSS. Results suggest that there was a low level of awareness of the existence of the Policy on Noise. Two key barriers to the successful implementation of the policy were the lack of resources and the low level of awareness of the policy.

Keywords: Policy, Policy implementation, National Environmental Policy, Barriers to policy implementation

INTRODUCTION

The need for environmental policies is ubiquitous in our times. Having policies as a nation is imperative because policies serve as a guide in decision making on what should be done or not to be done under specific circumstances. Research on policy implementation has been a hot discourse among social scientists since the 1970s [1] and has also been one of the major problems confronting developing nations [2].

Living and working in a good environment is key hence the formulation of policy to ensure citizens of the country live in a healthy environment which is not polluted. There are different forms of pollution which include water, air, land and noise. Next to the circulatory disease and cancer, noise pollution has been cited as the third epidemic cause of psychological and physiological disorder internationally [3]. Noise is an unwanted sound or a combination of sounds that has adverse effects on health [4]

Environmental noise interferes with the social behaviour and manifests in the form of psychological and physiological disorders through a variety of mechanisms [3]. Due to the erratic power supply and the energy management put in place by Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) as a result of the short fall in energy supply in the country, many households, businesses in residential areas, churches and households have resorted to the use of generators to meet their energy requirements. The use of these generators and corn mills in residential areas produce noise which a lot of people complain disturb them, perhaps due to the fact that the noise is above permissible and acceptable levels. It is believed that exposure to a continuous noise of 85-90dBA could lead to progressive hearing loss and changes of threshold sensitivity [3]. This phenomenon of exposure to noise may not be unique to Ghana because [3] observed that despite the existence of policies, legislation and global efforts put in place to address noise pollution, complaints about it have been neglected in developing countries. According to the [5] statistics available indicate that noise is still a nuisance in human settlements because the enforcement process has not been effective. Even though according to [5], EPA has produced guidelines indicating the permissible ambient noise level for the country, where the guidelines describe the area (zone) and the permissible noise levels during the day and night, it appears people are not aware and therefore engage in activities with high level of noise pollution in residential areas.

There is evidence that policies rolled out in developing countries most of the time do not achieve their objective [2] and this may be due to challenges encountered during their implementation among other factors. This paper therefore attempts to investigate the level of awareness of the policy on noise among Ghanaian citizens and the barriers to the successful implementation of the policy.

The paper is structured in five (5) main parts: the introduction, brief about the National Environmental policy, review of concepts, results and conclusions.

National Environmental Policy (NEP-2012)

Ghana's first Environmental Policy enacted in 1992 was based on a broad vision founded on and directed by respect for all relevant principles and themes of environment and sustainable development. Successful policy implementation depends on the extent to which stakeholders are involved in its formulation. The [5] was formulated through a participatory process where several stakeholders like MDAs, Academia, financial

institutions, and the informal sector among others were involved in drafting after which validation workshops were carried out [5].

According to [5] P.7 the purpose of the policy was of four (4) fold. These are, to:

- guide environmental governance in Ghana
- serve as a reference material for research and development.
- guide the country's development along sustainable path and
- ensure the country's commitment to conventions, protocols and international agreements.

In an attempt to achieve these purposes, certain challenges are encountered and [5] relates all to the four pillars of sustainability namely: Natural Resource Management issues, Socio-Cultural issues, Economic issues and Institutional dimensions.

Noise nuisance, one of the Socio-Cultural issues has been identified as an environmental challenge and therefore a policy formulated to address it. The main sources of noise according to [5] can be put into four (4) which include noise from:

- motor vehicles and traffic, particularly from diesel operated vehicles and machines;
- unnecessary blowing of sirens and horns;
- noise generated from traders, hawkers and commercial activities at lorry parks and markets;
- Places of worship and funeral activities

Other sources of noise according to the policy include noise from printing houses, textile mills, weaving plants, sawmills, flour mills and activities such as blasting in the mines and quarries. The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has set ambient noise level guidelines but statistics available indicate that noise is still a nuisance in human settlements because the enforcement process has not been effective due to the inability of Metropolitan/Municipal and District Assemblies to play their role [5]. The study is of interest to the researcher because according to [4] approximately 10 million adults and 5.2 million children in the United States of America (U.S.A) are already suffering from irreversible noise induced hearing impairment and 30 million more are exposed to dangerous levels of noise each day. One of the reasons for which this study is being conducted is to identify the barriers to effective implementation of the policy on noise among others.

METHODOLOGY

The mixed method was employed because of the nature and focus of the study. A self designed questionnaire was distributed to people living mainly in residential areas but not industrial areas and other officials involved in policy formulation and

implementation were interviewed to gather data. A purposive sampling technique was used to select drivers, pastors of churches and other users of generators. In addition simple random technique was adopted to choose the citizenry who were even non users of generators. The interviews were transcribed (content analysis done) and the data gathered with the use of questionnaire was also analysed using SPSS.

Conceptual clarification of public policy and policy implementation

Scholars have viewed policy from different perspectives even though it is central to the operations and activities of both private organisations and public institutions [6]. Policy, a course of action made up of a series of decisions discrete choices (including the choice not to act) over a period of time [7], may be general or specific, broad or narrow, simple or complex, public or private, written or unwritten, explicit or implicit, discretionary or detailed, and qualitative or quantitative [8]. It is a purposive course of action taken or adopted by those in power in pursuit of certain goals or objectives [8]. Thus there is a conscious effort to identify appropriate actions/activities aimed at addressing particular issues to achieve specific targets. [9] later defined it as whatever governments choose to do or not to do. This definition shows that public policy involves the actions of government which deal with problems and other issues that have been identified. [9] believes that public policies may regulate behaviour, organize bureaucracies, distribute benefits, or extract taxes or all these at a time. He tends to focus on not only government actions but also its inactions.

[10] on his part regards policy as a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern. This implies policy serves as a guide confirming [11] assertion and that it delimits actions of the appropriate functionaries of institutions or government itself. It may take four main forms which according to [8] include a declaration of goals; a declaration of course of action; a declaration of general purpose; and an authoritative decision. Even though there appears to be definitional differences public policies can be explained as actions of government or other established groups or institutions aimed at addressing specified societal problems or issues.

Due to the importance of policy implementation in the policy process, policy implementation is referred to as the hub of policy process by scholars [6]. Policy implementation is what develops between the establishment of an apparent intention on the part of government to do something, or to stop doing something, and the ultimate impact in the world of

action [12] whiles [13] define it as a translating public policy intention into results.

There is usually a wide gap between formulated policy goals and the achievement of those goals as a result of ineffective implementation [2]. It is therefore prudent to find if this assertion by [2] is true in the Ghanaian context.

FACTORS AFFECTING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Several factors have impact on the successful implementation of policies. One of which is the social interaction between the actors in the policy process. These actors who are to ensure that the necessary resources are available [14] may be institutional actors or non institutional actors [15]. The institutional actors may include the legislature, executive, judiciary and bureaucrats while the non institutional actors include media, political parties, interest groups among others. These actors and other factors are influenced by certain constructs which include motivation, information and power [16].

[17] explain that successful implementation depends on the clarity of the law, the talents and financial resources available and the attitudes and resources of the groups affected by the policy among others. [18], on his part suggested that for successful implementation of policies certain factors have to be considered. These include the right combination of committed politicians and bureaucrats (saints); appropriate policy analysts with available and reliable information (wizards); management of hostile and apathetic groups (demons); and insulation of the policy environment from the vagaries of implementation (systems). It can therefore be concluded that there are variety of potential variables that influence successful policy implementation and therefore can be a barrier to policy implementation. The next section thus discusses some of the challenges one may encountered in policy implementation.

CHALLENGES OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Policy may be implemented effectively, but fail to have a substantial impact because it was ill-conceived or because of other circumstances [19], p. 449. Challenges or barriers to policy implementation identified by [2] include communication, corruption, lack of continuity in government policies, attitudes and inadequate human and material resources. He further explained that inadequate resource (Human and non human) can also cause implementation problems even if goals and instructions are clear, consistent and accurately communicated.

[2] also identified another cause of implementation gap to be the failure of policy makers to consider social, religious, economic, political and administrative factors when formulating policies. He explained that if for instance a policy maker in a highly Muslim dominated area formulates a policy that offends those tenets of the Islamic religion, he is likely to face challenges in its implementation. [2] is of the view that if economic factors are not considered in policy formulation there will be challenges in its implementation. The lack of funds will lead to the inability of policy implementers to function effectively. [20] have also listed three key challenges which can routinely impede the effective implementation of public policies. These include clarity of policy goals, information intelligence, and strategic planning. Even though these problems may be encountered, [14] has indicated that the solution to policy implementation process is the effective management of the process which include the creation of a more effective way to manage the communities, resources and bureaucratic dispositions.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics

A sample of one hundred and seventeen (117) people made up of 91female and 26 males were used. Out of these 53 were married, 56 not married and the rest widows/widowers or divorced. The study probed into the occupation of the participants and it was found that participants were engaged in various forms of occupation including drivers, church leaders/pastors, police, administrators, caterers, assembly men, executive assistants, immigration officers, secretaries, civil servants, journalist, public officers, business executives, national service personnel and students. Other occupations mentioned were teachers, account clerks, courier operators, bankers, fashion designers, human resource practitioners, marketing officers, nurses and librarians and some unemployed, that is they worked in different sectors, education, industry, service among others.

Level of Awareness of Noise Policy

Results on the level of awareness of the noise policy have been presented in Table 1:

Table 1-Key

I- Disagree very much II- Disagree III-- Agree IV- Agree very much
V- No response
1- Have knowledge of policy on permissible level of noise
2- Have technical knowledge about noise and its impact

3- Have been educated on guidelines for the implementation of the noise policy

Table 1. Awareness level of the existence of Noise Policy

	I	II	III	IV	V
1	42.1(%)	11.8(%)	10.9(%)	21.8(%)	13.4(%)
2	42.0(%)	17.6(%)	26.3(%)	12.5(%)	1.7(%)
3	43.7(%)	30.3(%)	13.4(%)	11.6(%)	0(%)

Information gathered indicates that the level of knowledge and awareness on the existence of the policy on noise in the society was very low. This was confirmed by a greater number of the participants who disagreed with the statement that they know *the policy on permissible level of noise within residential areas"*. This gives the indication that, there was not adequate information out there to educate the people on the level of noise permissible in the society which will create the awareness among the people in the society.

Results also showed that, in relation to having the technical knowledge about noise and its impact on the environment and the people within most did not have such knowledge.

Participants were further asked whether they have been educated on the guidelines for the implementation of the noise policy and from their responses it can be concluded that, the most did not share in that belief to give the indication that, there have not been much education on the guidelines for the implementation of the noise policy. This may explain why the level of awareness of the policy is low.

Some responses after interaction with participants to find out the reasons why the policy is not being enforced are capture as:

> *"I don't think the EPA has the required authority to enforce this policy and other times it becomes politics too"*
>
> *"This is because I believe the level of noise being made by the churches, mosques and drinking spot bars around are not being monitored. Moreover, the units involved in ensuring that the noise in the community are regulated are not doing their jobs"*
>
> *"There is lack of technical men, awareness and also the law against noise is not being enforced"*
>
> *"The government does not have the solution to the power crisis and therefore it cannot enforce the policy on noise"*
>
> *"Even those who formulated the policy are not abiding by it so most people if not all people do not also abide by it"*

However, few people who were of the view that the policy is being enforced gave their reason that they have witnessed people being prosecuted for making noise.

Table 2 shows the level of awareness of the policy on noise by gender. It is observed that, the mean score on awareness level of the existence of the policy on noise for male was 28.85 with a standard deviation of 10.17 while their female counterparts also scored a mean of 30.32 with a standard deviation of 9.28. The Table furthermore showed that, $t = 0.699$ and a degree of freedom (df) of 115, a p-value of 0.486 was recorded. Since $p>0.05$ significance level, it implies that, the difference in the mean score between male and female was not significant. Hence, conclude that, the level of awareness of the existence of the policy on noise among male and female was the same.

Table 2. Independent t-test of Gender on level of Awareness of Policy on Noise

	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	p-value
Male	26	28.85	10.17	0.699	115	0.486
Female	91	30.32	9.28			

The study also tested the level of awareness of the policy on noise among the respondents in relation to their marital status.

The Table showed that, the mean score on level of awareness of the policy on noise for participants who were married was 31.49 with a standard deviation of 8.89 while those who were not married also scored a mean of 28.70 with a standard deviation of 9.86. It is also observed that, at $t = 1.551$ at a degree of freedom (df) of 155, a p-value of 0.124 was recorded which implies a no significant difference between the mean score on level of awareness among those who were married and those who were not married since $p>0.05$. Therefore, I conclude that the level of awareness of the policy on noise in relation to the marital status of the respondents was the same.

Table 3. Independent t-test of Marital Status on level of Awareness of Policy on Noise

	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	p-value
Married	53	31.49	8.89	1.551	115	0.124
Not Married	56	28.70	9.86			

Barriers to the Implementation of Noise Policy

Table 4 presents findings on barriers to the implementation of noise policy which shows that, the most prominent barrier encountered during the implementation stage of the policy on noise in the society was lack of awareness. This was confirmed by 92.3% of the participants.

Table 4. Barriers encountered in the Implementation of Policy

	Count	Percent %
Lack of resources	106	90.6
Lack of clarity of policy	102	87.2
Lack of technical men	72	61.5
Lack of awareness	108	92.3

The level of awareness of the policy is very low and it is therefore not surprising that this is a major barrier to the implementation of the policy. People usually do what they know and therefore since they are not aware of the policy on noise, they are not likely to behave in ways to reflect what the policy says. This result confirms what [14] indicated that one of the four key variables that influence successful policy implementation is communication failure. When communication fails between policy makers subordinates, citizenry, they are not able to acquire the needed information and therefore implementation suffers. Again, [16] explained that for a policy or program to be successfully implemented; all the actors should have adequate information. Therefore with the people not being aware of the policy, it is bound to affect the level of implementation and therefore level of success of its goal.

Results also showed that, the second most prominent barrier was lack of resources, specifically funds. It was found that there are usually insufficient funds released for the implementation of activities outlined to ensure the implementation of the policy. Several researches carried out have also found similar results. [6] in a research to identify obstacles to effective implementation in Nigeria also identified that the lack or inadequate funding creates a barrier for the successful implementation of policies. In addition [17] also indicated earlier that one of the factors that determine the successful implementation of policies is the availability of financial resources. Results of this study also confirm earlier findings by [2] who identified inadequate human and material resources as one of the challenges/barriers to policy implementation. The least of the barriers was the lack of technical men. Majority of the people interviewed confirmed that there are inadequate technical hands to execute high level and technical assignments. Another challenge identified was the absence of a coordination

mechanism for policy implementation. That is, there are usually no review meetings to check the extent to which activities are carried out in the districts and municipalities.

CONCLUSION

Policy implementation studies are significant for developing world especially with respect to environmental policy (Noise) because of its effect on the health of citizens. Ghana is faced with energy challenges and therefore people have resorted to different means of meeting their energy needs, one of which is the use of generators some of which produces high level of noise. In Ghana, it appears the policy on noise have not been effectively implemented due to low level of awareness of the policy, lack of funds and inadequate technical men. It is therefore recommended that more education is carried out on the policy and adequate funds made available to ensure effective implementation of the policy.

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